1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

itself is made of wood, plaster, bamboo and thatch. All buildings have their entrance to the east and face north; the north-south sides are the longest. The first portions of the building to be erected are the five upright supports, one in the centre and one at each corner; they consist of roughly shaped tree-trunks. For the erection of these supports and for the building of the stone wall an overseer is necessary; for the rest of the building no director is used. The floor is usually woven bamboo, but some of the richer people cover the bamboo with smoothed planks; the walls are always of bamboo covered with plaster, occasionally with wooden supports. Except in the Mandal's house, where there are a couple of window frames, the south and west walls are blind; the entrance, which is reached by a pair of notched logs or rough steps, is always on the east; and round the east and north side runs a balcony of plaited bamboo. The north wall is mostly open to the balcony but there are usually wooden shutters which can be closed when the nights are cold. The balcony is used a great deal; for gossiping in the daytime or during warm evenings, for a great variety of household tasks, since there is seldom much light inside the house, as a place where fowls can roost, and as a latrine for infants, invalids, the drunk or the lazy. The roof is made of reeds hung over bamboo and supported on a wooden frame; the north and south sides of the roof cover the whole space between the roof-tree and the top of the wall, but the east and west sides are somewhat inserted at a slightly lower angle, so that there is a triangle (either empty or filled with widely-woven bamboo) on the east and west sides under the roof-tree which is meant to provide ventilation and an escape for the smoke; the device is not very successful and often of an evening I was half-blinded by smoke so that I could not see across a room and the tears streamed down my face. The Lepchas are completely inured to this atmosphere and could not understand why I coughed and choked.

The great majority of Lepcha houses consist of two rooms and an attic; a few of the poorest have only one room, and a couple of the biggest houses have a third small store-room beyond the *dé-ong*. The first room on entering from the east is the *thop-song*, or, as I shall refer to it in future, the kitchen. Round the side are either slightly raised shelves or a bar set into the wooden floor, which marks the sleeping places of the members of the household. During the day the bedding and pillows are rolled up and put away in boxes and are only brought out just before retiring to sleep. Except

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

for the sleeping places of grandparents or parents-in-law, which are avoided out of respect, these sleeping places serve as seats in the daytime. In the centre of the dividing wall is the cooking place; this is a built-up square of pounded earth and clay, perhaps five feet in each direction and raised about a foot off the ground; into this while it is still soft are inserted four upright stones to support the cooking pots over the logs of wood. Above the fire-place is a drying ledge of woven bamboo hanging from the rafters. There is a very fragile ceiling of bamboo which serves as a store-house; it is entered through a trap-door which is placed nearly directly above the cooking-place so as to allow the smoke to escape and which is reached by a notched log.

The dividing wall which separates the two rooms is usually a wooden partition (occasionally bamboo) with a door, or at least a door-frame, in the side nearest the balcony. This second room is called *dé-ong*. In the houses of lamas and of the more pious laymen there is an altar against the south wall. This altar varies enormously with the wealth and inclinations of the individual; some of the most elaborate are miniature reproductions of the altars in the monastery, with large metal images and musical instruments and other decorations; and in one or two houses there are pigeon-holes on either side containing the sixteen volumes of the Boom, the shortened version of the Kangyour. In other houses the altar is no more than a wooden box set up on end, with one small metal image inside, and sometimes not even that.

The *dé-ong*, whether it is fitted up as a private lamaist temple or not, is always more or less of a ceremonial room, for in it are performed the numerous ceremonies which occur in the life of everyone, for feared or actual illness or death, or for marriage. Ordinarily the room is little used and is only slept in by lamas, and not always by them. The attitude to the *dé-ong* is similar to that held towards the parlour in lower-middle-class English homes. It is the place where distinguished visitors are received, where emotionally important events of a slightly ceremonious nature take place; it is not a room which is used by the family in ordinary everyday life. In one or two houses there is a small and narrow store-room beyond the *dé-ong*; in other houses the *dé-ong* is used for this purpose also. Heads of maize and millet are suspended from the bamboo ceiling to dry, and sacks of grain and flour are kept under the altar. People fetching stores from this place are meant to prostrate themselves three times at each visit, but usually

1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

186 The Lepchas are remarkably tolerant. They are perfectly ready to admit the validity for other peoples of habits and customs which for them would be shocking or disgusting. For example the marriage arrangements of the Nepali, and some of the sexual habits of the Tibetans would be horrifying and disastrous if committed by Lepchas; the Lepchas know of these habits, and are inclined to laugh at them; but they do not reproach the Nepali or Tibetans for them, do not try and convince them that they are wrong, and do not fear moral contamination through contact with them. This tolerance is not accompanied however by any feelings of inferiority; the very strong sentiment of fundamental equality among individuals is carried over to a sentiment of fundamental equality between groups. Some people are richer, more industrious or cleverer than their neighbours; similarly the Tibetans are more learned and the Europeans richer than the Lepchas; but since the Lepchas are as learned and as rich as they can be, they do not, I think, feel any fundamental inferiority in comparison with more favoured groups, any more than they do in comparison with more favoured individuals. It is worth remembering in this connection how Gongyop in his prophetic dreams under the possession of Padem *rum* would visit the rulers of neighbouring states and Europeans and would be treated by them as an equal. It is noteworthy that the richer households and the learned lamas who can read do not, [554] except when the lamas are performing their special functions, demand or obtain any special preferential treatment.

[152] This tolerance of the Lepchas can be ascribed I think partly to contentment, and partly to indifference. Straightforward consumption—food, drink and sex—fills the forefront of their desires and aims in life; provided these physical needs are satisfied—and for the majority they are continuously satisfied—the other aspects of life are emotionally of less importance. In their dealings with the supernatural they are particularly tolerant and receptive; it is important to be able to deal with the devils but they have not any deep-set preference for one special method of dealing with them. Completely alien methods will be tried, and, if they prove satisfactory, adopted, however little they may be integrated into their general outlook; thus they have accepted the taboo on menstruating women in the treatment of cardamum, and retained the insistence on virginity in the sacrifices to the people of Mayel, though except in these instances virginity is a meaningless concept and menstruating women suffer under no disabilities. This capacity of accepting

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

scarf; he should be allowed to ride his own horse or another 671
good horse, and should be treated well, so that in the event 727
of your ever falling into his hands he may treat you well also. Any other prisoners should have their hands tied behind them, and they should be made to walk. Officers should be placed on old, worn-out horses, with broken harness and rope stirrups. Should an army be defeated and obliged to fly, they should not be reprimanded, but they should not be rewarded or receive any presents, even though the leader be a great man. The prisoners should receive what is necessary for subsistence, and also expenses for religious ceremonies, and men of rank should be treated well and with consideration.

"A man can only make a treaty for himself and his own descendants."

Concerning murder.

"The price for killing a gentleman who has 300 servants, 671
or a superintendent of a district, or a lama professor, is 300 682
to 400 gold srang. For full lamas, Government officers, and 554 ●
gentlemen with 100 servants the fine is 200 oz. of gold.

"For killing gentlemen who possess a horse and five or six servants, or working lamas the fine is 145 to 150 oz. of gold.

"For killing men with no rank, old lamas, or personal servants the fine is 80 oz. of gold.

"For killing common people and for villagers the price is 30 to 40 oz. of gold.

"For killing a man who has done good work for Government the fine is 50 to 70 oz. of gold.

"For killing unmarried men, servants, and butchers the price is 30 gold srang; and for killing blacksmiths and beggars, 10 to 20 oz. of gold.

"On the price being paid a letter must be written and a 671
copy given to each party saying that everything has been 682
settled. If a case is reopened a fine must be paid by him who opens the case. The murderer must write to the effect

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

from Mangen or Gangtok, being afterwards fitted with wooden handles by their owners. They cost from one to two rupees each. I have often seen a Lepcha cut down a bamboo as thick as a man's arm with a couple of strokes and a few seconds later, using the very same tool, put a point on a pencil that would be good enough to draw the finest line. Give a Lepcha his *ban* and put him in his own native forest and he will make you anything from a house to a wooden plate off which to eat your food. With the same one weapon he will make you a bow and arrows, and then skin and prepare the game. I never ceased to wonder at his skill.

There were two ancient matchlocks in Lingtem, one of which Palden occasionally borrowed. It was fitted with a bipod of antelope horns, and when the fuse was lighted usually spluttered for some seconds before going off with a deafening bang; but by this time the selected prey had long since flown. I would not myself have used it for untold cash; but in the eyes of its owner, and perhaps in the rest of the village, it was a symbol of progress—a mark of the civilised man.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

587 but the party was continued until dawn the next day. Since this was not a first marriage the full three-day festivities were not carried out: nor will Ongden and his bride make the usual ceremonial visit to her people. In this particular case there was, I gather, really no need for him to have done any ceremony except the formal betrothal; but since he is
● [554] a man of standing in the village he has preferred to do things properly. In any case, no Lepcha will miss the opportunity of throwing a party, provided the necessary funds are available.

15th March:

A number of "corpses" lying about under the bushes. Most of these had removed themselves by nightfall.

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583 Before betrothal a boy usually does a certain amount of work for his future father-in-law, and may even stay in his house should he happen to live in the same village. This service is entirely voluntary and is in no sense looked upon as payment for the bride. After the formal betrothal has taken place, however, the girl's parents can call upon the boy's services for a period of three years; but if the marriage takes place within this period the obligation ceases.

591 When a man has a daughter and no sons he arranges, if
584 possible, that his son-in-law shall live in his house, in which case the boy becomes what is known as a *Komok myok*. In these circumstances he is treated exactly as though he were the real son of the house, except that he has a less hard time. It is not always easy for a man to obtain a *Komok myok* for his daughter; for unless such a boy has several brothers his father will not normally wish to lose him, since it means that he will have no one to help him work his own fields.

431 When a man is so poor that he cannot afford even the
585 minimum marriage gifts everyone in the village helps him. This is looked upon as a gift and is not repayable. It is,

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951) 1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

the "Place of Gods" via a subterranean passage, the entrance of which is a cave in the vicinity of Monphu, while the Heemos claim, that the spirit enters this way near a rock called Sing Dang, in the vicinity of the village Samdong. A different cave is said to be the entrance for the dead of the Lingsomo clan. This cave is called Dret gang and it lies near the hamlet of Rabdentsi. A legend current among the Namphagmo Lepchas claims that the dead of this clan do not go to Mt Kanchenjunga, but to the Mennam mountain, which is specially sacred to this clan. They reach the mountain through a subterranean passage the entrance of which is the Phim Leb cave near Lingmo.

The funeral ceremonies end on the seventh day after the burial. At first, on the third day some rice, *ci*, and eggs were brought to the grave and after five more days had passed, a hen is sacrificed and then some prayers are said by a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* in order to chase away all malignant spirits and to cleanse the house from all evil once more.

There was no difference between the burial ceremonies of the *Bar fong mo*, the Lepcha aristocracy, and the *A den* or common people, and the dead of both groups were treated alike. Only the funeral rites for a *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* were performed in a different way. Even today, a *Bong thing* or *Mŭn* is not cremated, but mostly buried according to the old custom. In his house, the dead person is dressed into the full garment of a Lepcha sorcerer and his face is covered, as customary, with a white cloth and also the coin for *Fă grŏng thing* is placed on his forehead. Around the body, all his magical instruments and drugs are spread out, the latter being kept in flat, closed baskets. Furthermore, a small ladder—"to reach with its help the *Rŭm lyang*"—dried fish and birds, the beak or at least some other part of a crane, the beak of a hornbill and numerous baskets containing various foodstuffs are laid all around the corpse. The body is later placed on a bamboo stretcher, together with all objects enumerated above and carried out by the door,—and not by an opening in the wall or floor, as done at the funeral of a common man. Then the body is carried to the grave and placed in the pit in a sitting position. On the left and right sides of the dead two magical sticks (*ceng pă ting*),[10] as used by the sorcerer during his lifetime, are placed and then also all the various paraphernalia, which had been brought on the stretcher, is laid in the grave.

The rites which follow are just like those performed at the funeral of common people. After the ceremony of calling back the *Mŭk nyam* has been carried out, also the spirit of a deceased *Mŭn* or *Bong thing* is conducted to the *Rŭm lyang*, to join the spirits of his ancestors.